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Spies With Press Cards

CIA director Stansfield Turner says the CIA should not be barred from recruiting foreign reporters or American journalists who are not accredited by a U.S. news organization. We believe Admiral Turner is wrong, particularly on wanting to hire American newsmen to work for the spy agency.

Last year Turner banned recruiting of American reporters who worked for accredited news agencies. And that is fine. But there is not all that much difference between many staff writers and photographers and free lancers throughout the world. In addition, many American reporters are not loathe to cooperate with (but not work for) the CIA when it seems

appropriate. So why the desire the sign up reporters as spies?

Then, too, members of the American press have special privileges and occupy a unique place in our free society. That role should not be perverted by trying to turn newsmen into spies.

We in the South also recall the era of the civil rights struggle when all sorts of federal and state agents posed as reporters and photographers to try to keep tabs civil rights activists. Their activities made the work of legitimate newsmen more difficult.

Recruit free-lance American journalists for the CIA? We think not, Admiral Turner.